

Message Text

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44

ACTION AID-59

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FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1877

USMISSION ECBRUSSELS PRORITY

INFO AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY BAMAKO

AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY BONN

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMEMBASSY MONROVIA

UNCLAS NOUAKCHOTT 133

AFDROUGHT

EO 11652: NA

SUBJECT: FOOD NEEDS OF ISOLATED ZONES AND STORAGE OF FOOD IN
THE SAHEL

REF: STATE 24527, NOUAKCHOTT 101, 115, 122 (NOTAL)

MONROVIA FOR DONALD S. BROWN, ROME FOR FODAG, PARIS FOR HELMAN,
USEC BRUSSELS FOR MARTIN, LONDON FOR BAAS

SUMMARY: BOTH WFP REP NOUAKCHOTT AND CHARGE HAVE RECENTLY DISCUSSED
PROBLEMS PRE-POSITIONING GRAIN STOCKS IN ISOLATED REGIONS MAURITANIA
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(I.E. REGIONS CUT-OFF FROM OVERLAND ACCESS DURING RAINY SEASON)

WITH GIRM DROUGHT RELIEF COORDINATOR, MINHEALTH. MINISTER ACCEPTS EMBASSY /WFP VIEW THAT IT WILL BE VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE CONSTRUCT SUFFICIENT STORAGE CAPACITY OF TYPE ORIGINALLY ENVISAGED UNDER USAID R AND R PROGRAM PRIOR TO BEGINNING OF RAINS IN JULY-AUGUST. MINISTER IS, THEREFORE, MOVING TO CONVINCE CABINET AUTHORIZE HIM INSTRUCT REGIONAL GOVERNORS BUILD STORAGE FACILITIES ALONG TRADITIONAL LINES USING MAINLY LOCAL MATERIALS. HE ALSO INTENDS INSTRUCT GOVERNORS TO RENT STORAGE SPACE WHERE NECESSARY. SO FAR, HOWEVER, EMERGENCY GRAIN ARRIVALS HAVE JUST BARELY KEPT PACE WITH CURRENT MINIMUM CONSUMPTION NEEDS AND MINISTER HAS BEEN UNABLE BEGIN PREPOSITIONING ANY SUPPLIES FOR RAINY SEASON DISTRIBUTION.

1. GIRM--THAT IS TO SAY MINHEALTH--CONCURS WITH FAO RECOMMENDATION FOR NEED ADDITIONAL 40,000 MT GRAIN STORAGE CAPACITY ISOLATED AREAS AND KEY DISTRIBUTION CENTERS. FAO RECOMMENDATIONS AND FIGURES, IN FACT, BASED ENTIRELY UPON GIRM ESTIMATES, WHICH IN OPINION THIS MISSION ARE SLIGHTLY INFLATED, PARTICULARLY AS REGARDS ADDITIONAL STORAGE NEEDS IN ROSSO AND ATAR.

2. IN ADDITION TO USAID DOLLAR 350,000 STORAGE CONSTRUCTION PROGRAM UNDER SAHEL R AND R FUNDS, GIRM ALSO HAS FIRM FED COMMITMENT BUILD 15 TO 20,000 MT STORAGE CAPACITY AT COST IN EXCESS DOLLARS 800,000. PROGRAM AIMS AT FOLLOWING CAPACITIES: 1,500 TO 2,000 MT EACH AT KAEDIO ALEG, BOGUE, TIDJIKJA AND ATAR; AND, 4 TO 5,000 MT EACH AT ROSSO AND NOUAKCHOTT. FED, HOWEVER, ADMITS THIS CONSTRUCTION PROGRAM WILL STRETCH THROUGH 1974 RAINY SEASON AND EVEN INTO 1975. SAME TIME-LAG PROBLEMS, OF COURSE, EXIST FOR AID-FINANCED STORAGE ACTIVITY, PARTICULARLY BECAUSE AIBO PROGRAM ENVISAGES CONSTRUCTION IN ISOLATED EASTERN MAURITANIA, WHERE SEVERE TRANSPORT PROBLEMS EXIST EVEN DURING DRY SEASON.

3. TAKING ALL ABOVE INTO CONSIDERATION, WFP REP EMBASSY HAVE MADE COORDINATED APPROACH TO MINHEALTH URGING HIM TO BEGIN IMMEDIATELY WITH STORAGE CONSTRUCTION PROGRAM USING AVAILABLE TRADITIONAL, KKTNDURABLE MATERIALS (STONE, PACKED EARTH, ETC). PROGRAM, AS WE ENVISAGE IT, WOULD BE UNDERTAKEN BY GOVERNORS AND PREFECTS, AND FINANCED BY USAID R&R FUNDS FOLLOWING APPROVAL OF COST ESTIMATES AND PERHAPS SITE INSPECTIONS BY AADO, OR EMBASSY STAFF. FYI. THIS APPROACH TRIED FIRST BY EMBASSY ALONE

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IN EARLY JANUARY, BUT IDEA WAS INITIALLY VETOED BY PUBLIC WORKS MINISTER, WHO INSISTED UPON PERMANENT, MODERN CEMENT AND STEEL CONSTRUCTION. MINHEALTH, WHO IN FAVOR LOCAL MATERIALS APPROACH, NOW PROMISES TAKE MATTER UP WITH CABINET, USING OBVIOUS JUSTIFICATION OF FOOD EMERGENCY OVER-RIDE OBJECTIONS HIS COLLEAGUE. HE ALSO PLANS INSTRUCT REGIONAL GOVERNORS/PREFECTS RENT STORAGE AS NECESSARY. END FYI.

4. ONCE LATTER HURDLE IS OVERCOME, THERE STVLL REMANS FACT THAT GIRM A) DOES NOT YET HAVE SUFFICIENT STOCKS OVER AND ABOVE CURRENT CONSUMPTION NEEDS TO PREPOSITION IN PREPARATION FOR RAINS AND B) IS STILL SHORT OF TRANSPORT. AT PRESENT, MINISTER HAS ABOUT 14,500 MT GRAIN (11,000 ROSSO AND 3,500 NOUAKCHOTT) IN STOCK. HE HAS FIRM COMMITMENTS FOR ONLY AN ADDITIONAL 34,000 MT, SCHEDULED ARRIVE BY END MAY. GIVEN TOTAL NATIONAL CONSUMPTION ESTIMATED AT ABOUT 11 TO 12,000 MT PER MONTH, STOCKS IN HAND AND FIRMLY COMMITTED ARE CLEARLY ADEQUATE TO FFED THE POPULATION THROUGH 1974 HARVEST AND LEAVE NOTHING AVAILABLE BUILD RAINY SEASON RESERVES. WFP REP ESTIMATES GIRM MAY OBTAIN AN ADDITIONAL 60,000 MT FOOD GRAINS DURING CY 1974, BUT THIS TOTAL INCLUDES MINIMUM 20 THOUSAND TONS IN GIRM COMMERCIAL PURCHASES. MOREOVER, TIMING OF ADDITIONAL SHIPMENTS/PURCHASES IS CRUCIAL: THE BULK OF THEM MUST ARRIVE HERE WELL BEFORE START OF RAINS IN JULY-AUGUST IN ORDER TO REACH DISTRIBUTION CENTERS PRIOR TO THE OCTOBER-NOVEMBER HWRVEST. CURRENT INTERNAL TRANSPORT PROBLEMS (DETAILED IN NOUAKCHOTT 122 AND OTHER MESSAGES) APPEAR ON THE WAY TO BEING AT LEAST PARTIALLY SOLVED, BUT SEVERE BOTTLENECKS REMAIN. SHURTLEFF

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